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SIPDIS
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DEPARTMENT FOR INL/LP
DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/AND

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: SNAR PREL PGOV CO
SUBJECT: GAINS OF POLICE REESTABLISHMENT PROGRAM JEOPARDIZED BY
UNCERTAIN FUNDING

SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Since its inception six years ago, the Reestablishment of Police Presence in Conflictive Zones program has achieved impressive successes in restoring government control throughout rural Colombia. This program has also begun to play a major role in other high-priority missions, including manual eradication security, narcotics interdiction and pursuit of high value narcoterrorist targets. Sustained USG support remains a key enabler to this program. However, the zeroing-out of USG support to this program in FY08, and an uncertain USG funding future, undermines ongoing efforts to gradually shift USG-GOC responsibilities as part of our sustainable nationalization strategy and places this program's continued success at risk. END SUMMARY.

Establishing Permanent Police Presence

¶12. (SBU) Prior to the initiation of the Police Reestablishment program in 2002, there were 158 Colombian counties with no police presence, and many others in which the police presence amounted to little more than isolated outposts which were subject to frequent guerrilla attacks. The Police Reestablishment program, which consists of both rural municipal police and mobile Carabinero squadrons (composed of 120-policemen each), has facilitated the return of a robust Colombian police presence to previously lawless conflictive zones. In fact, in breaking a historical trend of more than a decade, insurgents have not successfully overrun any police base since 2006. Today all of Colombia's 1099 municipalities are under GOC control and violence nationwide has plummeted. This police presence has significantly decreased the freedom of movement of illegal armed groups in these rural zones and set the conditions for the safe arrival of follow-on GOC social services to meet the needs of citizens within these largely undeveloped areas.

Putting Narcos on the Defensive

¶13. (SBU) The Police Reestablishment program also plays an increasing role in GOC antinarcotics efforts. After President Uribe initiated a national manual eradication campaign in 2006, the FARC retaliated by launching repetitive attacks and emplacing mines in the coca fields to drive off manual eradication workers. In response, Carabinero squadrons were dispatched to help provide security for these civilian manual eradicators; today fully half of the total sixty-eight squadrons are engaged in this vital security mission. Carabinero squadrons have also taken the fight to narcoterrorist organizations in Colombia. In 2008 alone, these squadrons seized over nine metric tons of cocaine, 7.5 metric tons of marijuana,

destroyed 36 HCL and base laboratories, captured more than 1135 weapons and over 300,000 rounds of ammunition. Additionally, they captured a number of high level narcoterrorists, most recently alias "Memin" in September 2008, who was the leader of the Black Eagles (in Spanish, Aguilas Negras) criminal band and is currently facing extradition to the U.S. Although these types of emerging missions were not part of the original Police Reestablishment charter, they reflect some of the beneficial by-products of this program.

Underfunding Success

¶14. (SBU) Sustained USG support to the Police Reestablishment program has been a key enabler to GOC efforts to develop this program so well and so quickly. USG funding has totaled \$91.6M USD since 2002, and averaged between \$13M and \$19M annually during fiscal years 2004-2007. This USG funding was essential to the expeditious equipping and training of the thousands of policemen in the program, as well as in providing continuous operational support. In FY 2008, though, this USG funding was reduced to zero and since then NAS has attempted to stretch remaining program funds by reducing or eliminating several initiatives, such as the establishment of a long range communications network and base security upgrades. Despite this reduced burn-rate, we anticipate our remaining Police Reestablishment program funds to be exhausted by late 2009.

Comment

¶15. (SBU) COMMENT: NAS efforts to transition costs from the USG to GOC as part of the sustainable nationalization process are contingent on a gradual shift of responsibilities over a multi-year period. The unexpected zeroing-out of USG support to the Police Reestablishment program, particularly given its recent assumption of several additional - and costly - antinarcotics missions, complicates our ability to provide needed assistance today and jeopardizes our ability to ensure a gradual transition of responsibilities in the future. In the absence of such a glide path, the potential for a major disruption to the program's rural security and antinarcotics missions is all but certain.

¶16. (SBU) COMMENT (Continued): The Police Reestablishment program has enabled the extension of the Rule of Law throughout rural Colombia and set the stage for social and economic development and the delivery of justice. The expansion of the program into antinarcotics work is both important to the USG and a positive derivative of the program's original intent. Future USG funding of this program will help ensure its continued success in all mission areas; the alternative would result in an unlikely GOC ability to single-handedly maintain the program at its current level of effectiveness. END COMMENT.

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